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Sets bail at \$80,000

Judge is unmoved by CIA story

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A man accused of passing thousands of dollars of bad checks in Mercer County tried to talk his way to freedom on bail by claiming he is a former CIA agent, but the judge wasn't listening.

Hussan Romieh, 37, of Washington, D.C. made his plea yesterday before Superior Court Judge Hervey S. Moore Jr., who is generally regarded as the toughest judge in the county.

Moore set bail at \$80,000.

"I'm a citizen 19 years. I'm a spy," said Romieh, who also used the name Hussan Muhmamed Rumayeit.

"The charges are brought against me by spies. I can't use county jail phones because of the spies. . . . I'm a CIA man. I worked in Saudi Arabia.

"I'm not guilty. If you know my story," he told the judge, "you'll let me free."

ROMIEH, A longtime resident of the nation's capital, got into trouble with Mercer County law enforcement agencies in 1978 when he wrote a series of bad checks in Princeton Borough — including a \$3,500 check to a printing company and an \$800

check to the Peacock Inn, where he stayed for several weeks.

A 1978 Mercer County grand jury handed up four separate indictments against Romieh for writing more than \$5,000 worth of bad checks in the county.

Romieh, however, said he is "unlawfully charged."

"I'm president of the International Freedom Organization. I'm a former CIA agent. If you feel I'm guilty, give me a trial," the short, intense man said in broken English.

"I'm ready for trial."

Apparently tired of listening to Romieh, the judge then turned to the man's lawyer, John M. Jingoli Jr., and asked him to speak for his client.

Jingoli told Moore that Romieh has no prior criminal convictions, is a businessman in Washington, D.C. — although he didn't say exactly what line of work Romieh is in — and that Romieh's violations of the law "were not intentional."

But Mercer County Assistant Prosecutor Kim A. Otis told the judge that the state "went to great expense" to have Romieh extradited "on at least two occasions," from Virginia and California.

Moore refused to reduce Romieh's \$80,000 bail — \$20,000 for each of the four outstanding indictments.

"I find absolutely no justification for a reduction," the judge said.

ALTHOUGH MOORE had heard enough and proceeded to exit from his courtroom, Romieh raised his voice and made more impassioned pleas for freedom.

If the judge only knew what he was working on he wouldn't keep him in jail, he said.

Romieh's speech shifted to presidential politics, and he said that "things were much worse (for the CIA) under Carter. . . . I love Reagan."

He said he loves Reagan so much that he "tried to meet him in California to tell him about my secret work for the CIA."

Romieh is not, however, very happy with Reagan's CIA director, William J. Casey. He suggested he would kill him if he had the chance.

He said something about Casey being involved with big banks, but no one could understand him as his broken English worsened to the point where only one out of every four or five words was distinguishable.